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TAGS: [KN](#) [KS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#)  
SUBJECT: TOP POLITICAL ANALYST SAYS "LUCKY LEE" WILL WIN IN  
DECEMBER

Classified By: POL Joseph Y. Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) Summary: With just over three months until the presidential election, GNP candidate Lee Myung-bak leads all polls and most political observers predict he will celebrate his birthday, December 19, with a victory. Park Song-min, head of MIN political consultants, a leading political analyst and one of the Embassy's most reliable and accurate contacts, supported this common perception when he told poloffs on September 12 that Lee Myung-bak would win the December 19 presidential election. While it was possible Lee could still lose, Park said that thanks primarily to good luck rather than any particular political skill or policy vision, Lee's current gargantuan 40-50 percent lead in polls would not all evaporate. Lee was a poor campaigner and public speaker, but with no competitive liberal candidate, the Blue House was Lee's to lose. End Summary

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LUCKY LEE  
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12. (C) According to Park, GNP candidate and former Seoul Mayor Lee Myung-bak has led a charmed political life. In 1996 when Lee ran for the National Assembly, his two liberal opponents failed to unify, splitting the liberal vote and handing him the victory. (NOTE: One of the candidates he defeated was Roh Moo-hyun. END NOTE) In October 2006, the DPRK nuclear test catapulted him to the top of all presidential polls, because his principal opponent, Park Geun-hye, a woman, was not seen as tough enough for Kim Jong-il. He has not relinquished the top position since. Former Gyeonggi Governor Sohn Hak-kyu's departure from the GNP in March was key to Lee's August GNP primary victory. If Sohn had stayed in the GNP, he would have taken support primarily from Lee, handing Park Geun-hye the candidacy. Furthermore, the United New Democratic Party (UNDP) is in disarray and the liberals may not be able to unify behind a single, competitive candidate, according to Park. He said that Lee was truly a lucky politician and did not see the luck running out this year.

13. (C) Lee's political style was very practical and contrasted with past political bosses' styles that put a premium on loyalty. Instead, Lee used advisors and supporters as needed and then moved on to the next person. An example of this was Rep. Chun Yu-ok: after the GNP loss in the April by-elections, Chun resigned her supreme council

seat and came out publicly for Lee. Because she is a prominent lawmaker and former anchorwoman, Chun's support helped Lee. Currently, Chun does not figure prominently in Lee's inner circle. While Rep. Lee Jae-oh and Rep. Chung Do-un have central roles in Lee's campaign, Park suggested that neither would hold prominent roles if Lee was victorious since they simply were charged with maintaining order within the party. During the primary, there were about 50 lawmakers with official titles in the Lee campaign. However, in the candidate campaign office, to be officially formed by early October, there would likely be as few as 20 lawmakers with official roles.

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LIBERAL CANDIDATES  
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14. (C) On the liberal side, Park said he had counseled Sohn Hak-kyu not to discount Chung Dong-young despite Sohn's lead in polls. Park noted that Chung came in second in the 2002 presidential primary and won two internal party campaigns for party chairmanship. Chung's success and experience in party primaries should not be discounted and Chung, along with his aides, were experienced and skilled campaigners. In contrast, Sohn was surrounded with inexperienced, younger lawmakers. Park said he had previously predicted Chung would win the UNDP candidacy but now could not make a prediction since the UNDP primary rules were still not finalized.

15. (C) Park said Sohn Hak-kyu called him, at 1:00 am on September 10 after the decision was made to count public polling as only 10 percent, drunk and upset that polling would not have more weight in the primary process. Most analysts see the decision to weight polling at only 10 percent as favorable to former Uri Party Chairman Chung

Dong-young since he has stronger support within the party and Sohn has higher poll support. Park noted that the pro-Roh candidates could not be discounted since they had the support of the Blue House and also sufficient money to run their campaigns. That said, Park thought it would be difficult for Lee Hae-chan, the leading pro-Roh candidate, to defeat both Sohn and Chung.

16. (C) Yuhan-Kimberly President Moon Kuk-hyun, who declared his run for president on August 23 and already ranks fourth in some polls behind Lee, Sohn and Chung, would not be able to gain the candidacy because he lacked support from the elderly and uneducated. While many educated Koreans and NGO leaders were drawn to Moon, Park said to win a presidential election, it was necessary to gain support not from the educated, but from the over 50 crowd, who were most likely to vote. Moon had no recognition or support from this segment. Additionally, it would be difficult for Moon to draw the UNDP candidate into his camp no matter how his ratings might rise.

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COMMENT  
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17. (C) Park is in high demand on the airways and lecture circuit leading up to the presidential election. His grasp of Korean politics and his ability to analyze the "flow" of Korean society is excellent. Park's bottom-line assessment of Lee Myung-bak is that, yes, Lee is likely hiding a number of illicit financial deals, but that most voters were prepared to overlook this as he is seen as the candidate who could save the Korean economy, and the best alternative to lead Korea for the next five years.

VERSHBOW